



FROM THE CORE WITHIN
(a collection of verse)

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CONTENTS

1. The Spineless	1
2. The Rejection of a Cordial Julep	2
3. A Search for the Brains	3
4. A Painting in Blood	5
5. A Reverie	7
6. When Nadir Shah Fell Upon Delhi	8
7. A Hymn	10
8. Human Decorum	11
9. Motherly Affection	12
10. Progress	14
11. Grandma	15
12. Treatment	17
13. Fate	18
14. Parting	19
15. A Dream	21
16. Seven Poems on the Gulf War	22
17. Crucifixion	31
18. But	33
19. Welcome	34
20. Relief	35
21. Impact	36
22. Believe It or Not	37
23. Poesy	38
24. To the Secular Indian Citizens	39
25. Conscience	40
26. Is There A God Around?	42
27. Ways of the World	44
28. Charm	46
29. Goal	47

30. Nainital –I	48
31. Nainital – II	50
32. Nainital – III	51
33. A Question	52
34. Life	53
35. A Catalyst	54
36. Reality vs. Farce	55
37. This Civilization	56
38. Thou	57
39. Dedication of a Transformer	58
40. The Meeting	59
41. A Guest	60
42. Questions	62
43. How to Live?	63
44. Whispers	64
45. Nature	67
46. Fear/Joy	68
47. Wonder	69
48. Chitrakoot	70
49. Survival	71
50. A Hope	72

*Dedicated
to
my father
at whose feet I learnt
to enjoy the fruits of
creativity*

The Author

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THE SPINELESS

My conscience
Is like my
Maid servant
Who never bathes.

My conscience
Is like my
Naughty son
Who never obeys.

My conscience
Is like my
Healthy cat
Who turns pale
At the sight of a dog.

My conscience
Is like my
Family god
Who can be mutilated
By any Babar.

My conscience
Is like my
Blue parrot
Who does not sing
In a golden cage.

THE REJECTION OF A CORDIAL JULEP

Should I sing
Of my success or
Of my defeat?

Some are bleating
Of their success
Some about others' success.

Some are asleep
Some others have set out on a journey.

When it is time to sleep
Why should I sing?
Let me also sleep
But, to set out on a journey.

A SEARCH FOR THE BRAINS

'The best brains
are collected in Delhi
to run the government.'

'Who says so?
It is a fools' government
run by fools, too.
If it is KS's Delhi - -
it is a hermaphrodite.'

'Then search for the brains
in Bombay - -
our California - -
Among the disciples of Ezekiel.'

'How can they be there?
How can a brain accept
Ezekiel's hijacking
Poetry to Bombay?'

'Then try to locate them in
The twin cities.
They must be drinking from
Shiva's *Kamandala*.'

'The poor professor
no more pours drinks.'

'Surely then you have to
Go to 'Amar Bangla Sonar Bangla'
-- the great Kolkata.
You will find
the brain
sitting behind the printing press
crying 'Pi Pi Pi'.

'Oh, that
Professor turned poet turned publisher
himself abandons
those whom he selects.'

'They are not brain producers
but brain devourers.

'Find your muse among ancient sages - -
they tell you
Soham.

'Tell me were you
not wandering for naught?'

A PAINTING IN BLOOD

My hands are artistic - -
my fingers long - -
nails oval shaped
skin smooth
colour - - rosy pink
structure - - soft and fleshy.
I love them.

One day
I found them
opening someone else's letter.
I got suspicious.

Then I found them
stealing a cake.
They were dubious.

I also saw them
indulging in revelry
and then copulating
with wine and women.
They were characterless.

I saw them
participating in assassinations, too.
They were criminals.

But, they were my
lovely, beautiful, artistic hands.
How could I shed them away?

One day they stopped the razor - -
while I was shaving - -
on my neck.
I argued and argued.

But,
they did not listen to me
and pressed it against my neck
to cut my veins
to drench me
in my blood.

Such were my luscious hands!

A REVERIE

I slept on a stone bed
-- a railway platform bench
mostly with an empty belly --
and dreamt of
an ethereal sky
studded with bright stars
beckoning me to become one.

Ten others slept on
similar benches
and had similar dreams.

I lately started
to rob corpses
of their valuables -- an easy gain.
when a corpse was not available
I turned a man into a corpse.
But, I robbed only a corpse.
No crime indeed!

Then I could sleep with
My belly full
on the same bench
(others were not seen on theirs).
But I no more
have that dream.

WHEN NADIR SHAH FELL UPON DELHI*

Don't murder
Innocence,
O Nadir!
You may be a shah
Of cruelty.

But
It is
Innocence
That makes you a Shah.

You think
By crushing
A flower
You will
Stop the sky's falling from there
And the stars will not budge.

I may be offered to gods
Or
To decorate a corpse.
And you hate
Both gods and being dead.
But, your crushing me
Will make me double powerful - -

* On reading Khuswant Singh's *Delhi*.

-- The power
of the positive
and the negative
electrodes
put together.
-- The power
to turn your own seed
against you –
Have you forgotten
Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb?

A HYMN

God has made me blind.
God has not permitted me to hear.
God has not snatched my voice.
But, I do not have to lodge a
complaint anywhere.
He is great and wants my welfare.
He wants me to keep away from
seeing, hearing and speaking
what is vulgar.
He wants me to keep my
senses pure and 'virgin white'.

HUMAN DECORUM

The Cuban dancers
on my tele screen
are rippling very fast
to the tune of the band.
The pair bends forwards
and backwards
and swings side-wards, too.
As they present a sight
of Khajuraho sculpture.
People sigh ohs and ahs.
Why does a man stoop so low
to earn his livelihood?

MOTHERLY AFFECTION

I was born
crying on the outskirts
of a railway station.

I grew up in the
railway compartments - -
III class ones
or in the toilets of railway coaches.

My mother was
crushed - -
under the wheels
of a railway engine
while gathering crumbs - -
to feed us - - seven in all.

I became a railway clerk
and own a house
in the metropolis
very near the place
I was born.

My mother still
drags me
to the heap of rubbish,
which I also increase,
to find

some crumbs
to feed her
40 crore sons!

Who knows the moment
I'll meet my mother's fate!

PROGRESS

My great grand mother
begged to save
her son's life of black fever.
But could not save him.

My grand mother
begged to save
here son's life of cholera.
But could not save him.

My mother
begged to save
her son's life of tuberculosis.
But could not save him.

Now my wife is keeping the
family tradition
by begging
to save her son's life
of cancer.

How can she succeed
when three generations
have failed?

GRANDMA

Now
She can see
Just the mist
Just sparks
Just sparkles flying about.
Now,
She has grown old.

She used to love me dearly
Yes, very dearly.
But, her love is still very young.
Whenever I
Recollect how much I owe to her
I start weeping.
She told me stories, sang me lullabies
And what not,
When we used to be in bed.
At that time her greyish black eyes
Were rarely filled with water.
But now
Saline water is always trickling.
She used to cook for me
And also made me eat
Took care of my 'self'
Washed it and
Applied oil with motherly care.
I cannot forget her eyes
They still remind me of the same

OILS, LOVE, CARE, STORIES, UNIFORMS,
FOOD STUFFS.

Now she cannot enter
The house to tell me stories.
Her eyes have turned white
And have water in them all the time
Crying for mercy to be shown
By the outgoing passengers at the
railway station.

TREATMENT

How can I be sympathetic
And much supportive to them
When they have tried to
Keep me a slave
And have tried to
Keep me a fool
And have tried to
Keep me a coward?
Let them not publish my poems.
Yet they will see their day
As I will make them songs
That my comrades will
Use as clarion calls
To raise a storm
In the sleeping sea.

FATE

I was the rolling stone
who could not gather any moss.
Everybody seeing me clean
was attracted towards
ME
And used me
for whatever purposes
he/she liked.
And I like a
dumb stone
was just
being used.
Sometimes I wonder
why my atoms did not revolt.
Why do they not revolt
when I am kicked
by them
who made me
first their favourite
and then abused me
and my powers?
Having been kicked I am going down –
Perhaps, towards the plains
where from I won't go
any further down
and would gather
the MOSS.

A PARTING*

Do you remember
When you called me 'Honey' first?
You will say 'No' - -
I know your reply.

But, I also know your heart.
You remember it very well.
It was exactly
Ten years and ten seconds ago.
It was in the garden,
Behind the temple,
Near the fountain,
Right under the sodium-lamp.

I shall no more be with you
To watch you put a *bindi*
Or putting *sindoor* in the parting
Of your hair
Or changing your ear tops
Or colouring your lips.

Why you did all this - -
I knew but
Whenever I asked you,
You blushed.

*On reading Nissim Ezekiel's 'Jewish
Wedding in Bombay'

I want to part
With all your memories - -
My only treasure,
Which none can steal - -
But with a heavy heart
For I am a robber.
I robbed your virginity.

A DREAM

I tried to hold the dream
which had kept me busy
the whole night.
But like a handful of sand
in the Thar desert
only a few particles were left
stuck to my mind.
On waking up I found
I was the same white bearded man
but, the sweet smell of ambrosial *khir*,
warmth of a quilt in December
and protection of a cosy house
in an inclement weather –
still surrounded me.
How long could it surround me
with an empty belly, torn clothes
and starry sky over my head
in a December night?

SEVEN POEMS ON THE GULF WAR

I

The white birds
Sitting on the seashore
Have lost their colour
In their effort
To swim across the sea.
They bear the brunt
Of heavy oily waves
And look like the
Pieces of a letter
That has been torn and thrown into water
For bringing the message of death.

The letter does not
weep on a death.
But,
On the death of the sea
The birds not only weep
But also die - -
Perhaps they die knowingly.
So that the
Angels of destruction and death
May take pity
On the sea
And, also, on them.

II

In the school
I was taught the Song of Peace
And not the Song of War.

In the school
I was taught to play carom
And not the tricks of war.

In the school
I was taught the lesson of hard work
And not the one of cheating.

In the school
I had taken a vow to serve people
And not to kill the innocent.

Were my teachers wrong
In imparting me such an education?

Perhaps, they were.
Therefore, their lessons
Could not be used
And

I and my country
Lost the war.

Then, where should I
Send my son for schooling - -
To my alma mater
Or
To the Camper's school?

III

Mother
Are you angry
and you, too, o sister
only because
I have not written you a letter.
I want to, but
am unable to write.
I bring a piece of paper
and also a pen
and, now, I am able to
sit in a chair too.
But, words start metamorphosizing
when I recollect
soldiers with guns in their hands
tanks ready to crush human beings
souls trying to leave the bodies.
The letter turns red.
Your tears only are there
on the piece of paper
trying to wash bloody spots.
My pen moves on
but the letter remains a piece of paper
only
a piece of paper
which you don't need
but I will
because
once again I'll make
an attempt.

IV

With the martial music in the streets
Cars were replaced with tanks
and jeeps with armoured vans.
Papa brought me a gas mask
Instead of chocolates.
Mummy started crying
instead of singing lullabies - -
her brother had been killed.
Grandpa instead of taking a walk to
the seashore
Was confined to a damp corner of the
cellar and kept on muttering
The story of Abel and Cain.
And I,
Instead of making sand-houses
and collecting pebbles and shells on
the seashore,
started counting cockroaches
and collecting the peeling-sand.
Who knows if
this very sand
will be needed
to make a house.

V

Replying to the child's question
'What is peace?'
I said,
'Peace does not bring death,
'Sirens do not blow in peace,
'One has not to hide underground during peace.
'In peace one can buy bread from the market.
'People, in peace, do not cry.
'People, in peace, are not desperate and timid,
'Gas-masks are not needed in peace.
'Everyone gets work in peace,
'In peace you hold a flute and not a
stengun,
'In peace it is all calm and quiet
and no disorder, turmoil, rapine or
perdition, mayhem, perturbation'.

Then I prayed silently - -
Lest the child should ask
'Where is peace these days?'

VI

Can you
return me my brother
or my son?

They had not gone
to participate in a war
but had gone
to bring me a loaf
by standing in a queue.

I was to stand there.
But I did not go there and stayed back
thinking how a man without arms
would catch a loaf
for his old mother
(in whose eyes
there is still
a little light left).

Your words: 'peace', 'shelter', 'love',
'friend', 'guardian', 'protection', 'tutelary'
have lost their meaning
and are empty
for they cannot
fill a hungry man's belly.
A belly needs
bullets or a bread.

You cannot provide the latter.

To whom should I go for the first - -
to the enemy or to the friend?

VII

You might have thought
That the poets' imagery
Had become stale.
Therefore, they need to be helped
By establishing new norms,
New myths, new symbols, new rhythms and
new tones.

You thought it easiest
By killing thousands of innocents
By arresting thousands of innocents
By letting the corpses rot in the open
By not giving bread to the hungry
By snatching water from the thirsty.
But, you assessed me wrongly.
I am a poet and not a dog
That for an image
I shall pull the intestines
Of an innocently crying child.
Nor am I an oyster
To fill up my belly
From the oozing blood of a wound.
I am a man – neither B ... nor S

CRUCIFIXION

Your ideals, Jesus, are
Still with us --
In the field, in the barn
In the city, in the village
Inside the factory and outside, too
Also, on this bank of the drain,
And, on that bank of the drain.
In this stinking place
We breathe by your name only.
We look at you
And drink contaminated water,
After reading your words
We work for two extra - hours
But, the picture –
Jesus hanging on a cross –
Is losing its colour slowly.
And the words below it –
'Great Men Suffer Like Him' –
Are changing their meaning.
In place of Jesus' body
Only the shroud wrapping
The carcass is hanging,
Some day this shroud will get torn
And your carcass, Jesus,
Will fall like *Indra's Vajra*
On those who have converted
This world into a shop,
And will throw them out

Along with their luggage.
But, because of this only
You were hanged on a cross?
Will you repeat your act, Jesus?

BUT

Is it relevant to know
Who you are?
I can feel your dumbness
I also know you're growing numb.

May be it is your last breath --
But everyone has to breathe his last
May be a name rises from your voice --
But, who will trace him/her out?

You cry for water
I have a tumbler full of water.
But who will quench my thirst
if I fall short of water?

Our ancestors might have been one
But we stand on different planes now
My run ring warm fingers through your hair
Will make me feel and smell foul
Moreover, I've to rush to attend my duty
My boss is cruel --- you know.
Who has time for you now?
May be on my return I'll held you a bit --
To prove that God helped me a bit.

Believe me, I'll return
as will return the Christ.

WELCOME

My house does not have
Scorpion-infested doors,
Nor is it an island in the river of life.
I will not let it become
A lifeless clear pond.

Nor will I allow you
to call it a place of goodness.
You will not be able to call it
A bed of bondage.
Still, if you want to come in
You may.

Be sure
It will provide
Water to the thirsty
Tea to the exhausted
And food to the hungry.

RELIEF

I face
One face after another
While I sit glued to my T.V.
Every face has distorted features
but none shows the signs of happiness.
Even when they try to smile
They shed a tear or two --
Not of joy.

The wrinkled faces with sunken eyes
Cramped legs with bony structures
Heads larger than their chests
The faces turn into figures.
I sit glued
Somewhat awed somewhat afraid
but with the hope
that a shining face will appear.
I sit glued to my T.V.
Face after face
Figure after structure
But with no hope.
I sit glued.
Soon it was darkness around me
and the flowing screen was there.
I felt relieved.
Now I could not see even myself
And could sleep.

IMPACT

The crowd gathered
as the rain stopped,
When the river swelled
and huts were washed off.

Thatched roofs,
cows, goats, buffaloes
even
descendants of apes and monkeys
all floating in the
same direction
without any hurry.

Newspapers simply reported.
Even the minister came supervising
the distribution of food-stuffs and
contributed money to bury
the swollen body
in the mud.

Water receded
went down even the bathing places.
Water unto water
Or
Dust unto dust
But
The body is forlorn
And the world goes on.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

They don't believe me
but believe my passport.

They don't let me in
but let in my books.

They believe me to be a revolutionary
but don't let me be one.

They want to be my followers
but don't want it be known.

POESY

She prefers to be away
When I need her the most.
But I, too, don't run after her.
Nor do I cajole her
Nor do I request.
I promise you
I don't even reprimand her
Nor do I threaten.
Believe me
I don't run after her
For, I know
That she will come to me some day
She will have to - -
Like a hungry child to his mother
Or a politician to voters
Or a patient to a doctor
Or a car to a petrol-pump - -
As I am her need
For what are words
without an order?
But her coming to me
Will breed a poem
Only when I need her.

TO THE SECULAR INDIAN CITIZENS*

Smile, if you wish
but afterwards.
Shrug your shoulders,
but afterwards.
Show your helplessness,
but afterwards.
Show your tolerance
show your apathy
show your unconcern
to reveal only your cowardice
But only after listening to
the tale of
the widowhood of Mrs. Ganju,
the wiping out of Razdans and Rainas
and the tragic elimination of 'Premis'.

* On reading Jagmohan's *My Frozen
Turbulence in Kashmir*

CONSCIENCE

The sound
of the song
is receding.
Somebody
was whistling
and playing on the violin
in the
dark - dark
night.
The city
has slept.
The wind
is still blowing hard.
But
the tree
dancing to
the music of the wind
is no more dancing.

I know who was singing.
It was from there
that far away
where they think
they cannot reach.

Now
I am
chained
I have
fettters
on my ankles
and cuffs
on wrists.
but they
cannot capture me.

I am
INFINITE
I'll
fly away
to them
who are waiting
for me
But
I can
no more
enjoy the song –
something has died.

My heart
always fluttering
to see you
no more flutters.

The gap
is no more.

IS THERE A GOD AROUND?

They had taught me
that

I had an identity
because

I had a car -- air - conditioned
I had a refrigerator -- with Puf
I had a sprawling bungalow.

They had taught me
that

I had an identity
because

I had visited the UK
I had visited the USA
and because

I was a member of 'prestigious bars'
and because
I donated money liberally for pop shows.

It took me
Sixty six years to realize
that
They were wrong
And that they were befooling me.

Now they are doing the same

To my son.
And I'm just watching
And watching.
After all God too has been watching
Since the first Sunday.

WAYS OF THE WORLD

They say
I'm not a man
Because
I don't shave regularly
I don't put on a tie
I don't polish my shoes regularly
I don't go to restaurants
I don't host parties
I don't attend clubs
I don't drink
I don't smoke
I don't read *Stardust* and *Debonaire*
I don't go to cinema
I don't have a TV
I don't have a refrigerator.

They say
I'm abnormal
for
I pay enough to the rickshaw puller
I pay enough to a vegetable vendor
I pay attention to my students
I spend enough to purchase books.

They say
I'm carrying a dead load
of my old parents, memories of
my childhood, dead values.

They want me to carry
the load of living-deads,
to give me the certificates –
worth rubbish.

CHARM

All my questions
Fall down
Like involuntary tears
When you stand smiling at me.
Words transform themselves
And they're about to
Take a shape
But,
Immediately you turn away.
Words feel shy once again,
Once again they transform themselves
When I find you with your
Back towards me.
But,
Your flowing hair
done into a plait
Like a cobra –
Having a hood --
Contrasting with your body colour --
Carry me away again
And words wither away.
You take a turn
Words once again transform themselves.

GOAL

Forty heads –
Forty pots
going up and going down
some catching life
some craving for life.

You and I
Staring at them
And wasting our time.
Let them toss
Let them break
Let them hit
Let them be mad.
How does it matter?
Why should we care?

You and I
have a long way to go.
You and I
have, also, to make a way.
You and I
have to go.
You and I
have to go.

NAINITAL - I

I went to the
Lake - city called Nainital.

On my left hand side
The jungle of concrete
was spread up to the top.
On my right hand side
Only a few buildings
were there amidst the dark forest.
I saw the Naina Temple
which was more of a picnic spot
than a place of worship.
While some took rest there
after squandering too much in the
Tibetan market,
Others were ogling at the lovely
comely belles.
Beggars were sitting lined up - -
each waiting for a coin - -
and cursing his/her fate
but blessing others artificially.
On a mule an Indian Mem
was trying to adjust herself
but found it more uncomfortable
every time.
The mule-owner's son
barely nine or ten in years
was panting for breath

and so was the mule.
But, they had to keep running
for they would get money
only for a fast ride of the Mem.
Suddenly, the child stumbled
and rolled down to fall
in the ditch near the Naina temple.
The blood from his head
made a garland for the deity.

The Mem cried, "O bloody..."
but showing pity
threw a ten rupee note on the corpse
(insufficient even for the shroud)
and went away
cursing in a murmur
the child
for spoiling her picnic
to the Tiffin-top.

NAINITAL – II

They surrounded me
and pestered me to take a boat-ride.
They looked hungry
from their wrinkled faces,
but they appeared sturdy.
I chose a boat
that was decorated most
The boatman was also neatly dressed.
He was soon panting
but
went on
narrating the history of Nainital.
Facts came out from his mouth
as if rupee notes were coming out
from very near the chest
of a villager in a bank.
When I paid him
he pocketed the amount
and
ran to hook another customer.

NAINITAL – III

He wanted to look at Nature closely
And I wanted to teach him intensely
So we proceeded on together
relentlessly.
He drew my attention to the beautiful trees.
I pointed to the roots which made
the tree stand.
he showed me a mile long queue of ants
I pointed to the grains that they
were carrying to their homes.
He showed me the endangered leopard
I pointed to his fur coat.
He showed me the chirping birds
I interpreted :
'Live in peace, live in harmony'.
He showed me singing Lucy
I pointed to the music created by
her mowing.

'East is East and West is West and
never the twain shall meet.'

A QUESTION

When did my life begin?
When I was a bud or
When I turned a flower or
When I was in full bloom or
When my leaves withered or
When I turned into a seed or
When I consummated.
I am not certain.
Help me, please, if you can.

LIFE

I embraced this life
When it was smiling, sweet and friendly –
When it was spreading its scent
Like *Harsingars* in early November.
Everyone was nursing it
In one way and another,
Days passed by leaving no emptiness.
All this turned me into a slave.
I was a slave of time or of life or of body?
I stand disappointed now.
Waiting for my salvation!
Waiting for my *Mukti*!

A CATALYST

I came here
on the beach
searching for solace, rest and peace.
I wanted to forget everything
but the rambling waves
darkening clouds and roaring winds.
I thought
I'd share my grief with them.
And they'd pity me
And in turn I'd pity them.
And this meeting would pass by
unrecorded and without any thanks-giving ceremony
And our sorrows would vanish like dew.
But the fire in me has not extinguished here.
Rather it has grown even more turbulent
And the winds are not letting it die
And the clouds enrage it
And the waves add to it.
But, this fire no more troubles me.
Should I thank you, O, sea?

REALITY VS. FARCE

We need not be truthful
if we are being human.
We need not speak our heart
if we are in this city.
We need not moan
if we are in the clinic.
We need not talk about ailments
if we are talking to a doctor.
We need not extinguish the fire
if we are in the dark.
We only need to carry fire-crackers
if we need to bring a new order

THIS CIVILIZATION

Why am I not ashamed of a
naked child begging on the seashore?
Why am I not ashamed of a
half-naked woman selling peanuts?
Why am I not ashamed of a
hungry child looking for crumbs
in a heap of rubbish?
Why am I not ashamed of a
sharper lecturing on the
importance of truth?
Why am I not ashamed of a
charlatan administering medicines to a patient?
Why should I be?
Am I not a part of this civilization?

THOU

Plato confused me.
So did Socrates.
Sick of Nietzsche
I come to the shore
with Krishna
to be drowned in eternity.
Hare Rama! Hare Krishna!
Hare Rama! Hare Krishna!

DEDICATION OF A TRANSFORMER

(a poem in half english)

Brothers and sisters,
Meet Mr Upadhyayaji who is our M.P.
He is kind to come here
and bless us
by giving us one transformer.
Our village is alight now.
We will progress now.
We will not burn mid-night oil now
because our M.P. sahib has given us
electricity
Electricity is dangerous also
and helpful also.
Some may try to touch electricity
they will die.
So keep you and your children
away from it.
M.P. sahib has to reach Delhi.
He may go there by electric city
M.P. sahib zindabad.
Upadhyayaji live long.

THE MEETING

He quipped
“Has somebody died
in your family?”
I was startled.
I did not anticipate such a question
from him – a mere stranger
He has been with me since 2 o’clock
Which is wasted only by thirty minutes to
this moment --
Not enough time even for acquaintance
though, even ages are much less.

A thick-set man he was,
grinning every time
to ingratiate himself with his boss, perhaps,
or to over-stress his light-heartedness,
or simply to show his teeth.

But he is not a fool;
He is worldly wise
and he combs his hair up.

People bother themselves
Only about the dead.
How to tell him
‘Save yourself -- the bacteria will
soon eat you up.’

A GUEST

He had come a long way
To be
My guest.
To take him to places around --
So that he did not feel depressed,
Was my duty.
I took him to
The Bhairav Mandir, the Danteswari Temple
The ancient palace -- the palace of the king,
The modern palace -- the Bhilai Steel Plant,
The natural habitat -- Kanha,
But he did not seem pleased.
My efforts failed,
and my money wasted!
Nothing seemed to interest him.

Yesterday he showed his preference.
He liked to walk leisurely
On the path that ran through fields,
Beyond the village bounds --
where it led to a nighty forest:
Silent -- all to himself.
He liked it most
When it was all deserted
With none else to be seen --
Neither comely village belles,
Nor lusty young men,
Nor a bird, nor a beast.

With me alone -- a mute companion
he would walk -- perhaps musingly.
That was his utmost choice.

I laughed and
He felt surprised.
But, how could I tell him
That emptiness
he could have seen and felt
even at home --
had he peeped into my heart.

QUESTIONS

If I reach
a place where
you have an abode
O God!
I shall not sing hymns
in your praise.
But will ask you questions.
And you'll have to answer
and not just smile as
you have been doing
all these years.

So will you have to face
my questions
if I reach a place where
you have an abode
O Satan!

Don't worry my
questions are simple.
why have you divided the
world into the good and the evil?
Why can't there be just one world?
Why do you have an ego and
an alter-ego?
Why can't you let the world
just go?

HOW TO LIVE?

I've kept my
Centre outside.
To move around
it has become
a principle --
Not to search LOVE
But HATRED
Which one gets on open footpaths
In small, narrow, dingy streets
In the beds with bugs.
Bugs really bug
but they're your TRUE companions.
The sun is outside the earth.
Mother always separates the child
To move freely.
To get success
LOVE is not necessary
But HATRED is.
I'll move around my centre
To move will be my pleasure
To do the things for him
Will give me pleasure
Him love
But me hatred and satisfaction.

WHISPERS

Fog is all around me
Who is going to help me?
Who is going to show me the way?
Will they?
How can they?
They themselves are balls of mist
knowing nothing of their past,
Or present
Or future.
Should I go back to my water --
There's nothing here to be identified with
At the present moment --
To meet the Great Soul?
Should I leave?
Is this the time for me to leave?
Has the time come?
Should I delay?
What matters if I'm wrapped in fog?
I have a coat and boots
others do not have even these.
But they are running fast
To catch their destination.
where is it -- do they know?
They know this mist may not end
Before they die.
The Sun may not rise
Before they and their journey end.
They will laugh

At the end of the journey
though none will care for their laughter.
It will mix up with the fog
The winter wind will take it up
To the mountain top
To mix it with snow,
To freeze it,
So that people may not hear it,
So that may not know
Others too are walking with them.
Can the wind deny the fact
That they have been walking,
Fighting the mist
Which may mislead them
From their desired path?
To reach their destination
Who can show them the way?
Will scriptures help them?
Can the solution of the present
be present in the past?
Will some angel come to their help
To show them the way
To lead them to their goal?
How will he recognize them?
Can it help us?
To go out in the sun
To enable us to see the Sun
To realize our own identity
To say
O my brother!

We have been long with you
But could not help you.
We were the same as you
Future alone will show the way;
Hope alone will guide you.
You can't find the way
If you don't believe ME.
You will miss the way
If you don't believe ME.

NATURE

I thought
I was nothing but water;
So I went to the lake
And entered it
But couldn't bear the chill
And came out.
Then I thought
I was more like snow than water
And I tried to mingle with it.
But my bones started rattling
And I had to believe
I did not belong even there.
I tried to mingle with
Clouds, vapours, rain, river ...
But this five feet nine inches body
Remained aloof every time.
Should I try other elements?

FEAR/JOY

Sometimes I wonder
O mother earth
Why you haven't bestowed
Sensibilities to any of your
Sons or daughters
to ask your permission
Before starting a war
Or making an explosion in the Atlantic/Thar
Or running an atomic submarine in the Pacific
Or laying land-mines in unknown places.
At other times I wonder
If you could dare to say
'No' to all such proposals.
After all, you too enjoy killing,
Of course, through different means,
at different places.

WONDER

Like a kite
I was flying in the
Open sky.
I was dancing with joy
And was happy to see my height.
I was at the top,
Over every head.
Suddenly, I entered a cloud,
My joy knew no bounds;
I was enveloped by the purest of vapours.
Soon I was seen rushing towards the sky
Eager to touch the Sun.
But, I was hit by an eagle;
No it was not an accident;
It was sent to chase me --
Someone was jealous of my status --
But someone else was guarding me too.
Now I was not fighting
But the someone else was.
I was soon dancing in the sky
As I saw that eagle
Going down and down
Making a gyrating movement
To taste dust and to become so.

CHITRAKOOT

I wandered from place to place
To search out Chitrakoot
Where my revered Ram
Spent the best part of his youth.
I observed monkeys
Sleeping, eating, running, frowning.
I found pebbles and thorns
Ready to stick to my feet
Or even to my dress.
I saw temples galore
Thronged by scholars and the ignorant alike.
Starved beggars and
Healthy mendicants were blessing people
While some other were uttering abominable words.
Hillocks covered with trees or with boulders
Came my way.
I spotted the bathing *ghats*
Crowded with people
Ready to take dips in the holy Mandakini.
The businessmen were busy
Briskly selling their goods:
Eatables and religious and sacrilegious items.
I was just dismayed
Nobody was distraught
With my quest of Chitrakoot.
Nobody was as worried as I was.
All of them had found their Chitrakoots.

SURVIVAL

“How will you
Survive this pollution, vagaries of nature”,
Asked the concerned mother-flower,
“O child ?
I am too fragile to protect you
From the Sun, the wind and the hungry animals.”
The bud by now had started
Opening its leaves
And the bee had been waiting for this moment.
The arduous bee entered the calling bud before long
And sucked the nectar from its tenterhooks
To gain energy and become more vivacious.
Soon the leaves withered.
The mother thought that
Its son – or was it a daughter ?-
Was struck by the pollution or the bacteria.
It cried over its vulnerability and infirmity.
The flower was ready to multiply itself.
How come the mother was oblivious of the fact!

A HOPE

If we are the creatures of God
Or, the objects of nature--
I don't care.
I just want to worship
The pagan in you for
This is the only hope
To survive in face of the devastation caused by
The green, saffron, yellow, and white.
The pagan alone will bridge the gap
Between you and me
And will prove that
We are made of the same elements
And that every element is absolutely vital
And that this world can be made
Safer only this way.

The Author

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